

## ***Carex sychnocephala* Carey**

many-headed sedge  
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

**Status:** State Sensitive

**Rank:** G4S2

**General Description:** Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969): Plants tufted, without creeping rhizomes. Culms slender, 2 to 20 inches tall aphyllopodic. Leaves flat or nearly so,  $<1/16$  to  $1/8$  inch wide, few but well scattered, the upper often surpassing the culms. Spikes several gynaeandrous, sessile, closely crowded in a dense, ellipsoid or ovoid head  $2/3$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch long, light green or greenish-stramineous in aspect. Bracts sheathless, one or more of the lower ones much enlarged and foliaceous, 3 to 8 inches long, the spikes thus appearing to be surrounded and much surpassed by the leaves. Pistillate scales pale or colorless and largely hyaline-scarious except for the firmer midrib, commonly acuminate or shortly awn tipped, shorter than the perigynia and often largely concealed among them. Perigynia pale greenish or stramineous, very slender, mostly  $1/8$  to  $1/4$  inch long and  $<1/16$  inch wide, 5 to 7 times as long as wide, planoconvex, several-nerved dorsally, few-nerved ventrally, with an elongate, narrow, strongly serrulate, bidentate beak. Stigmas 2. Achenes lenticular,  $1/16$  inch long and  $<1/16$  inch wide.

**Identification Tips:** The bracts at the base of the heads are long and foliaceous (3 to 8 inches), much longer than the heads, giving this sedge a distinctive appearance.

**Phenology:** Flowers June through August.

**Range:** Occurs from British Columbia to Ontario, southward to Washington, Montana, Colorado, South Dakota, and New York. In Washington, the taxon is currently known from Okanogan and Ferry counties in the Okanogan Highlands and Eastern Cascades physiographic provinces. There is one historical record from Pend Oreille County.

**Habitat:** Occurs on moist or wet ground adjacent to marshes or along lake shores. Some sites are somewhat alkaline. Substrates vary from rather rocky to sandy and silty soils. Species occurring at one or more sites include *Scirpus maritimus*, *Cyperus aristatus*, *Polygonum persicaria*, *Rumex maritimus*, *Conyza canadensis*, *Aster brachyactis*, *Ranunculus sceleratus*, *Epilobium* sp., and *Cirsium vulgare* and *C. arvense*. Elevation ranges from 1000 to 3000 feet.

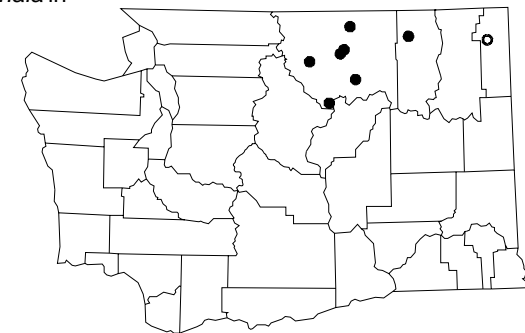
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Known distribution of  
*Carex sychnocephala* in  
Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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**Ecology:** Identified as a facultative wetland species by the USFWS (1988). The species appears to have a relatively broad ecological amplitude, occurring on a variety of substrates, including those that are at least moderately alkaline.

**State Status Comments:** There are fewer than 10 recent occurrences in Washington.

**Inventory Needs:** There is a lot of potential habitat in Washington that has not been surveyed for this species.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Hydrologic alteration is the greatest threat to the species. Other threats include recreational development and forest encroachment. Under some circumstances grazing may also be a threat. The plants definitely get eaten, although generally they do not get uprooted and they seem to be able to withstand trampling.

**References:**

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1988. National list of vascular plant species that occur in wetlands. USFWS Biological Report 88 (24).